

PAST PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS.

PART IV.—CONCLUDED.

The Republicans met in convention at Chicago in May, 1860, to nominate their candidates. No Fremont was wanted on this occasion, for it was felt that the candidates nominated here would assuredly be sworn into office on the 4th of March, 1861. It was only the old heads of the party that were taken into consideration, such as William H. Seward, Abraham Lincoln, Simon Cameron, Salmon P. Chase, Edward Bates, William L. Dayton, John McLean, Jacob Collamer, and one or two others, all of whom had strength enough to make their nomination possible, and to give them claims upon the party in case of victory. Of all these candidates, Mr. Seward was in reality the strongest; and the general expectation was that he would be the candidate chosen. Having assisted at the birth of the Republican party, he had done more than any other public man to give its principles, dignity, currency, and popularity, and his claims were seconded by some of the most expert political managers we have ever had. Indeed, we may say that he was expected to walk over the course and win the cup without an effort. Several causes conspired to disappoint the hopes of his friends and give the nomination to Mr. Lincoln. One of these was the natural inclination of all political parties to select as their standard-bearer a man who represents its principles, without having incurred the odium of originating them. Another was Mr. Lincoln's merits as a man, and as a Republican, which had been conspicuously displayed in the recent and vividly remembered contest with Mr. Douglas. Next to this in importance, the convention met at Chicago, in Illinois, where the preference for Abraham Lincoln was a wild and passionate desire. Chicago swarmed with the devoted adherents of the Springfield lawyer, and deafened the delegates with cheers for their favorite whenever his name was mentioned. There was "something in the air," as we say, which seemed to impel the wavering irresolutely to gratify a wish which beamed in every countenance and was thundered from ten thousand tongues.

But, perhaps, neither the merits of Abraham Lincoln, nor the enthusiasm of his friends, would have sufficed, if there had not been on the spot a man of unequalled influence over the minds of Western Republicans, who had come all the way from New York to Chicago for the purpose of advising Republicans not to nominate Mr. Seward. This was Horace Greeley, the man who had done more than any other to commend and sustain the person to whose selection he was now opposed. Some years before, there had been a movement in New York to nominate Mr. Greeley to the Governorship of the State; and surely, if ever services to a party can give a claim to the honors of party, he was entitled to an office in the power of his party to bestow. We might further say, that if substantial and long-continued services to the country, if giving to its civilization an impulse, and to its industry development and information, can ever constitute a claim (which, however, we deny) to the suffrages of the people for high office, then Horace Greeley is entitled to any which the people have to give. The occasional errors of the editor of the Tribune, chief among which we regard his devotion to the protective system, should not blind our eyes to his great merits as a public teacher. There has not been in the United States a writer more influential to change votes than he, and his services to his party have never been confined to the labors of his pen. During every important political campaign, he has been accustomed, besides doing two men's work upon his paper, to address four or five audiences a week. There are more eloquent speakers than he; but there is, perhaps, no man whose public address, moderate, dignified, and skillful, decides more votes than his. Such had been some of this able man's services to his party for twenty years. But, in 1860, some of his friends proposed to recognize these services by placing him in nomination for the Governorship of his State, the project was opposed by the more immediate and intimate adherents of Mr. Seward, and it was certainly not favored by Mr. Seward himself. Then it was that the editor of the Tribune, in a celebrated letter, gave notice that the political "partnership" which had long existed between "Seward, Weed & Greeley" was dissolved by the "withdrawal of the junior partner," and that thenceforth he should consider himself at liberty either to oppose or support the head of that firm, on public grounds alone. Since Horace Greeley is a human being, it is reasonable to suppose that his course at Chicago, in opposing Mr. Seward, was in some degree influenced by the events just related. He may not have been conscious of the fact; but men are often unconscious of the motives which really control their conduct. He had, moreover, fully persuaded himself that Mr. Seward was not the strongest candidate of the Republican party in some of the States necessary to be carried, and he was also of opinion that it was desirable to introduce into the city of Washington the tactics which had long prevailed at Albany. He was aware, too, that the election of Mr. Thurlow Weed to the Presidency would place Mr. Thurlow Weed in a position of commanding influence, and give a rival newspaper advantages of inestimable value.

In the Tribune, for months before the convention met, and at Chicago during its session, he threw the whole weight of his influence and his talents against Mr. Seward, and his opposition was decisive. Upon the first ballot, Seward received one hundred and seventy-three votes; Lincoln, one hundred and two; Cameron, fifty; Chase, forty-nine; Bates, forty-eight; Dayton, fourteen; McLean, twelve; Collamer, ten; scattering, six. Neither candidate, therefore, came near having a majority of the whole number; but every time the vote was taken, Mr. Lincoln gained and Mr. Seward lost. Cameron and Collamer were withdrawn, which raised the vote of Mr. Lincoln to within three of a majority. On the fourth ballot the requisite majority was obtained, and the nomination was immediately made unanimous. The youngest boy who was present will not live long enough to forget the wild enthusiasm with which the tidings of this result, shouted from a window of the "wigwam," were greeted in the streets of Chicago.

Having accomplished his main object in preventing the selection of Mr. Seward, Horace Greeley, on all occasions, advised that the defeated chief of the Republican party should be invited to take the first place in Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet. For himself he asked nothing, and was offered nothing. He had never recommended the nomination of Abraham Lincoln, but had exerted all his influence in favor of Mr. Bates, of Missouri. When some of his friends urged his appointment to the office of Postmaster-General, he peremptorily declined accepting any office under the new Administration.

There is a general impression that Abraham Lincoln was a kind of innocent lamb, who was elected and re-elected without any agency of his own. But no man can escape the law of his position except by abandoning his position. We say again, that so long as the President of the United States possessed an unlimited power of removal from office, the interior politics of party necessarily consisted of these two things:—First, to reduce the pledges made during the last Presidential campaign; secondly, to form combinations for the next. We have had one President to whom this remark does not apply—George Washington—and it was because he alone, of all our Presidents, never incurred a political obligation to an individual. It is not in human nature, and it is folly to expect it, that a President, in the distribution of honors and offices, shall not recognize the claims of men who have aided his elevation, and whose aid he needs for a continuance of the public favor. Abraham Lincoln was not only a politician, but he was a keen, able, and closely calculating politician. Were not the leading members of his cabinet—Seward, Chase, Cameron, Bates (and Dayton, his Minister to France), the chief competitors in the Convention of 1860? And was it not the timely withdrawal of some of them, and the partial withdrawal of others, which secured his own nomination? Does the reader suppose that there was no connection between those appointments and the change of votes in the Convention? If the reader does suppose this, it is himself who is the innocent lamb.

Nor was Mr. Lincoln passive in the events which led to his nomination in 1864. Every individual who was likely to be a formidable candidate was either shelved or provided for. No one can have forgotten that, when the nomination Convention of 1864 assembled at Baltimore, Abraham Lincoln was not the choice of the Republican party. Far from it, it was a period of the deepest gloom—disaster upon disaster—in the field had shaken the public confidence in the ability of the administration to save the country. The desire for a change of leaders was general and decided. Banks had failed in Louisiana. Grant had not succeeded in Virginia. The Mississippi was still threatened, and to many minds the issue of the war still appeared doubtful. In war time the strength of an administration increases with victory and diminishes with defeat. But, as we have before remarked, a President who can gratify or disappoint the personal ambition of thousands of his fellow-citizens, who can appoint and promote military and naval officers at his pleasure, who can award contracts that enrich the holders of them in a single season, and who is himself a man of force and ambition, can control absolutely the proceedings of a convention composed almost entirely of men who have received or expect benefits from him. Mr. Lincoln used his power without hesitation or reserve, and, as long as man is man, every able man in a similar situation will do the same.

He desired, both for public and personal reasons, to be re-nominated for the first office. The Convention complied with his known desire. He wished Andrew Johnson, for public and personal reasons, to be selected for the second office, and this desire also was gratified. When the convention came to a vote, the delegates from every State and Territory in the Union indicated a decided preference for Abraham Lincoln, excepting those from Missouri, who preferred General Grant. The nomination of Andrew Johnson was accomplished with almost equal ease. Upon the first ballot, Mr. Johnson received two hundred votes; Hannibal Hamlin, one hundred and fifty; Daniel S. Dickinson, one hundred and eight; and all others, fifty-nine. Upon the second ballot the delegates took the hint, and Mr. Johnson was nominated almost unanimously. Conventions, however, can only nominate. If the campaign of 1864 had presented as gloomy a view in October as it had in June, not even the insanity of the Democratic platform could have saved the Republican party from defeat. It was General Sherman's timely capture of Atlanta which turned the tide of public feeling, and caused the people to recoil with horror and disdain from a platform which proposed, in effect, to give up the contest and the country.

Thus we have briefly reviewed the Presidential nominations of the past eighty years, during which five Presidents have been nominated by caucuses of members of Congress; two by legislative caucuses, public meetings, and the press; seven by national conventions. By each of these methods the people have succeeded in electing men of respectable private character, of patriotic intentions, and of sufficient ability. Except in one instance, which need not be specified, the domestic life of the White House has been creditable to the civilization of the country, and the routine duties of the Presidency have always been performed with dignity and promptness. No President has ever been so much as suspected of personal corruption. From 1787 to the spring of 1865, the people could regard their Chief Magistrate as a gentleman, and boast of his natural equality with the best rulers of the most advanced nations. It is true that some of our later Presidents were too subservient to a dominating and exacting interest. But we do not believe that any of them were basely so; and we must confess, with shame and contrition, that they erred in common with a majority of their fellow-citizens. Some of them, we know, were led astray far more by their love of the Union and their anxiety for its continuance than by personal ambition. The existence of slavery in this republic was an anomaly which perplexed and corrupted nearly every individual. Instead of bitterly censuring the politicians of the last twenty years, we should consider that, up to the moment when we were prepared to fight the Southern oligarchy, nothing was possible to us but compromise. How many of us were prepared to submit the controversy to the arbitration of the sword before it was forced upon us? One man! John Brown was his name.

At every Presidential election the issue before the people has been distinct and vital enough to justify the zeal with which it has been conducted; and however great the public excitement may have been, no serious disturbance of the peace has ever occurred; and, except on one memorable occasion, the acquiescence of the whole people in the result has been immediate and complete. The ambition of individuals has always enlivened and sometimes embittered the strife; but, upon the whole, the people have had their will, and the Government has reflected, with considerable accuracy, the intelligence and the moral sense of the nation. On several occasions the result of a Presidential election has astonished and grieved a large majority of the educated class. But we firmly believe that, on every one of these occasions, without a single exception, the people were right, and the class wrong. They were manifestly right in preferring Jefferson to John Adams. They were right in putting the seal of their condemnation upon the extreme tyranny of John Quincy Adams. They were right in sustaining Andrew Jackson in

his war upon the United States Bank, although the manner in which that war was conducted was violent and sometimes outrageous. They were right in setting aside the gallant and gifted Clay, identified as he was with issues extinct as erroneous. They were right in voting to defer the final contest for the supremacy of the Union until the Union was strong enough to endure it. They were right in frustrating the inconsiderate ambition of Douglas. They were right in accepting the issue of battle when it could no longer be postponed, and gloriously right in persisting in the fight, under discouragements and disasters without a parallel in the history of the world.

The duty of electing a President is again before us. The task ought to be easier than it ever was before since the days of John Adams. That insolent and determined band of men who represented the planting interest will never again be the disturbing and distracting element which they once were. Their power is broken, their wealth is consumed, their prestige is gone. Those of them who are not by nature unteachable will reflect upon past events and become wise through suffering; the unteachable will be compelled to submit to a state of things which no power of man can reverse. Nor will the ceaseless influence of the President interfere with the choice of his successor, because a President severed from the party which elected him is a thing of naught in the politics of the United States. Like John Tyler, he may pack a convention, establish newspapers, and hire orators, but all his efforts cannot produce one Presidential elector. The lineal heir, too, of the administration shares both the odium and the impotence of his chief; and, in short, there appears nothing to prevent the selection of candidates who will have a legitimate claim to the confidence and esteem of the parties they will represent.

The South will win, as so often before, provided the nation will let it. The great mass of the Northern people yearn for unity once more united and satisfied—the whole of it. Not the less determined are they that the abolition of slavery shall be real, complete, and final, and that no other "peculiar institution" shall arise to take its place, and call into existence a class whose interests will be opposed to the general interest, and whose motive of action will more resemble the sentiment of a clan than a patriotic love of the whole. These are the real desires of the people of the Northern States. And hence, the conduct of the South during the next few months will exert a powerful influence upon the nominating convention of 1868. If the South is orderly and reasonable, candidates of moderate and conservative opinions will be in request; while another New Orleans massacre would give supremacy to the most radical wing of the ruling party.

Must the next President be a soldier? The desire to honor and reward the men associated with the final triumph of the nation over its enemies is natural. But could the Presidency be a reward to them? Their fame is now assured, and their position eminently desirable. In-trenched, as they now are, in the love and gratitude of all their fellow-citizens, without distinction of party, would it be coming in any party to subject their lives and good name to the relentless scrutiny of a Presidential campaign? They take them from a sphere which they adorn, and lure them into one for which their past lives and their settled habits may have unfitted them. Let our generals rather enjoy the honors which the country has awarded them, and go down to their graves wearing the uniform which they have assisted to win. Let us beware of subjecting them to a trial which scarcely any character issues without the revelation of some blemish before unseen. We have had one professional soldier, and only one, in the Presidential chair; for Washington, Jackson, and Harrison were citizens who only became soldiers when their country needed defenders, and resumed the arts of peace when their services in the field were no longer required. General Taylor alone was a professional soldier, and the history of his administration does not warrant a repetition of the experiment.

People sometimes complain that the choice of President does not take a wider range, instead of being confined to the little circle of men prominent at Washington. But this appears to be a necessity of the case, and it is perhaps a fortunate necessity. No man would be so likely to make injurious mistakes, or fall into unworthy hands, as a President unfamiliar with the men and ways of the city of Washington. The best intentions might not prevent his being continually misled, and, like Harrison and Taylor, he would be likely to fall a victim to the distracting excitements and intense anxieties of the place. The captain of a ship should be an honest man; but he must also know the ropes. We want for President a man and a patriot, but one who is also enough of a politician to know politicians and their ways. "The tools to him who can use them."

The public is little aware of the activity with which the business of President-making is carried on at present. A public man, who is within the circle of possible candidates, scarcely performs a public act which is not either prompted or influenced by his Presidential aspirations; and there is scarcely a vote given in Congress upon an important question which is not given with a view to its supposed effects upon the prospects of the voters' favorite candidate. Does a prominent person write a letter favoring the device of swindling servant-girls which goes by the name of Fenianism? It is a sure sign that he hopes to be voted for in November, 1868. Is a public man of great eminence and popularity silent on public topics, and is he never mentioned in connection with the Presidency by leading newspapers known to be devoted to his interests? It is an indication that he is moving heaven and earth for a nomination. Is a man of real merit assailed by slander, and are his public services systematically undervalued or denied? It is a proof that some candidate for the Presidency is an interest in removing him from the field of competition. Is a Secretary of State insolent to a foreign power beloved by portions of the people? or does he extend the area of freedom a little in the nick of time, and when freedom had neither expectation nor desire of additional area? It is a sign that age has not withered nor custom staled his infinite and irrevocable desire to change his quarters to the Presidential mansion. Would you know what candidate the incumbent of the Presidential chair is favoring? Ask the Collector of the New York Custom House what candidate he prefers.

Persons who have had experience in the art of getting men in condition to run the Presidential race, inform us that the following is the way in which the thing is done. It is necessary that the candidate should have a certain amount of political capital to start with—either a great reputation, or some high office, or a commanding position in the politics of his own State. The candidate who possesses one or more of these varieties of capital must look about him, and ascertain what other men are in training for the contest, in what consists their strength, and what are their comparative chances, and what means they are

employing to effect their object. The next thing is to form a combination with one or more of these competitors. A says to B, through an obliging friend: "My chances are better than yours; what will you sell out for? Will you be Vice-President, Secretary of State, or Minister to England?" If an arrangement is made, the nucleus of a combination exists, and nothing remains but to add to it other members in a similar manner, all of whom, in their several States and localities, use their utmost exertions, both in public and in private, to exalt the name and promote the interests of their chief. A very important point is to secure the cooperation of a great newspaper, and, when that is done, a candidate is pretty sure to appear in the list of names voted for on the first ballot in the nominating convention, and to have votes enough to give him a claim upon the honors within the gift of an administration. And this is all that the most ardent and ramified wire-pulling can effect. Other influences are encountered in open convention, and the result of its deliberations is likely to be in accordance with the desires of a majority of the party.

How fortunate are we in being able to amuse and appease the ambition of powerful men without the slightest danger to the public safety, or even to the public tranquillity! How much better it is for our Cesars and Pompeys to be rival candidates at Baltimore conventions than to plunge their country into civil war! How much nobler, as well as safer, is the mass meeting than the battle-field! How much better for rival ambitions, while assailing each other from the stump, to afford amusement and instruction to the people, than to array the people against one another in bloody fight, and desolate their land with fire and sword.—Northern Monthly.

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